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10 July 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. BUNDY

SUBJECT: Missile Gap Materials

We now have (Tab A) in unclassified form statements by Secretaries of Defense McElroy and Gates; Chairman, JCS, General Twining; Secretary of the Air Force Douglas; Chief of Staff, USAF, General White; Director DDR&E, Dr. Herbert F. York, --all acknowledging the missile gap. For good measure, a concurring opinion of the missile/space expert Von Braun has been added.

We also have (Tab B) extracts from articles by Joe Alsop and Drew Pearson, which refer to Allen Dulles' classified testimony before the Senate Preparedness Committee in early 1960, in which Mr. Dulles predicted the USSR would be ahead of the US in ICBMs. A chart from a February 1960 issue of Life magazine demonstrates how this reached a wide public audience.

Tabs A and B are furnished as examples of the sort of thing we can develop in greater detail from unclassified sources.

To have declassified the pertinent portions of the CIA briefings to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1959 and 1960 would appear to be a delicate task. I requested CIA advice on declassification procedures of its briefings to the Committee over two weeks ago through Mr. Cooper. The CIA contact responded slowly after a second prodding last week by pointing out that the Agency did not often declassify materials, much less materials of the kind we had in mind, and did not really know specifically how to deal with the situation. USIB would be the normal channel for declassifying its estimates. It probably would not be a viable channel for this sort of action because of the sensitivity of past estimates and the lack of compelling evidence to make them public. Declassification possibly could be handled by Director McCone, but the feeling was that he would feel it necessary to take it before the USIB. There are, of course, some precedents for declassification of intelligence data. One comparison that comes to mind is the public briefing last winter on the USSR troops and missile removals from Cuba.

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A complicating factor in declassifying the materials we have in mind is that transcripts of briefings before Congressional Committees are considered Committee property. They should not now even be in our hands. Normally Committees declassify information only when they publish reports, and that point has been passed with respect to the briefings we are interested in. Thus, I should think the desirability of making such a request would have to be very carefully weighed.

Another factor renders questionable the necessity to declassify certain figures from the 1959 and 1960 CIA briefings before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The transcripts do not list Senator Kennedy as being present. Surely he read and heard of the briefings later--in the paper and in halls of the Senate. Nevertheless, to avoid any possible backfire on this count, it would seem preferable to stick to the general approach of relying on published reports for this data.

A second classified document referred in my memorandum of 20 June is the Gaither Report. This report was submitted to the National Security Council in 1957 and thus is the property of the President. Declassification of the report would be handled by Bromley Smith as Executive Secretary of the NSC. The normal procedure is for him to canvas the agencies which participated in the report, in this case Defense, ODM (now OEP), CIA, and Treasury, to secure their approval. Mr. Nitze has already come in with a view that the report could be downgraded to Secret. It is not known whether he would wish to go further.

Chuck Johnson has mentioned an important consideration militating against declassifications of the report, with which I agree. First, it would establish the undesirable precedent of releasing NSC reports to the President, a practice which has been carefully avoided in the past. Even Congressmen have been deprived access to these privileged reports on a formal basis. I understand that the information from reports to the NSC has been released from time to time but never the reports as such. The Gaither Report itself was denied to the Senate Preparedness Subcommittee in 1957, although the contents were generally made known to the Committee, according to the then Press Secretary Mr. Hagerty.

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Since, therefore, a Congressman would not have had access to the Gaither Report, as such, it would seem satisfactory to rely on published accounts of its contents. These accounts were neither confirmed nor denied by the Administration nor the Senate Preparedness Subcommittee but they have considerable credence.

For my part, I believe it will be unnecessary to have declassified any actual figures on estimated Soviet ICBMs presented to Congress or the Gaither Report. The public record will support the case that a missile gap generally was foreseen. Even Mr. Nixon, after his July 1960 "summit" meeting with Governor Rockefeller in New York implicitly seemed to agree there was a gap. The Joint statement issued after the meeting (Tab C) called for increased defense expenditures on missiles, Polaris submarines and bombers. In presenting the case from the public record, adroit references could be made to the fact that classified briefings by CIA and DOD to the various committees of Congress and reports to the NSC during this period did nothing to remove doubts but rather served only to confirm them.

In summary, I think the case for believing in 1960 that there would be a missile gap can be developed from reliance on (1) the public record before Congress, (2) criticisms from knowledgeable defense critics, and (3) adroit references and innuendos to classified reports and CIA and other classified briefings and testimony before Congress. Rather than declassify any figures, it would seem preferable to have several "authoritative" scholarly, articles, or even a Congressional report quietly floated over the next year which would add substance and perspective to the public record, and which, in the process, could confirm any figures deemed necessary to the case that now are available only in classified form.

Attached (Tab D) is an unclassified skeletal statement which briefly makes the case. It is a "one-armed" piece in that it has no "on-the-other-hands;" these could be added without jeopardizing the basic thrust of the paper. The case could also be developed much more comprehensively if such is considered desirable.

W. R. Smith
W. R. SMITH

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Senate
Joint Hearings
Missile & Space Activities
29 January 1959

"Secretary McElroy: ... as I have said, down the road we expect him to have the capability to do more than we intend under our programming to do for ourselves in the strictly ICBM area.

"Senator Symington: Then as I understand it, your position is that we are voluntarily passing over to the Russians production superiority in the ICBM missile field because we believe that our capacity to retaliate with other weapons is sufficient to permit them that advantage despite the great damage that we know we would suffer if they instigated an attack?

"Secretary McElroy: I would like to modify the expression a little bit, but it won't be very much different from what you have said."

Hearings
House Committee on Armed Forces 1959
Military Posture Briefings

"Mr. McElroy: We do not have ICBMs, and I'd better get the record straight on that. But we expect to have a few ICBMs in July of 1959. We expect to have a few more in December of 1959. This is within a few missiles of what we would expect that the Russians might have at that time--a few missiles or a way or the other."

February 3, 1959 - Page 820

"Mr. Price: Then if you project those figures on the programming that you have laid down here, at the end of a few years numerically where would we be, first or second to the Soviets?"

"Mr. McElroy: ... if the Russians used what we believe to be their capability to produce--and we don't know whether they will but we are assuming they probably will--if they used that, they will have more ICBM weapons on launching pads than we will."

February 4, 1959 - Page 851

"Mr. Stratton: ... as far as 1960 and 1961 are concerned, the Soviets will have more of these weapons than we have, and that this, to a large extent, ... is the result of a deliberate decision on our part not to utilize our full ICBM capacity; is that correct?"

"Secretary McElroy: It is correct. The only part of it that I think I must again be sure is clearly understood: We do not say that they will have this. We say they can have this."

February 6, 1959 - Page 909f

"Secretary McElroy: It is not our intention or policy to try to match, missile for missile, in the ICBM category, the Russian capability in the next couple of years."

House Subcommittee on Defense Appropriations

In response to Mahon's question of whether we should consider the lag behind the USSR in ICBMs as not too significant:

"Secretary Gates: Mr. McElroy made such a statement in his testimony last year. . . . Secretary McElroy was operating on the basis of capability figures that produced, on a theoretical capability basis, something that was like 3 to 1. The new intelligence estimate has narrowed the differences."

January 13, 1960

House Subcommittee on Defense Appropriation

"Secretary of Defense Gates: If we compare the estimated Soviet ICBM and sea-launched-missile programs with plans for deployment of US ICBMs and Polaris missiles, we note that the Soviets may enjoy at times a moderate numerical superiority during the next three years. The difference in numbers appears to peak during the 1962 period. Our estimates indicate that both before and after mid-1962 the numbers are closer together."

January 13, 1960

Hearings
House Appropriations Subcommittee
DOD Appropriations for 1960

"General Twining: We would like to have more ICBMs than they have. I guarantee we ought to beat them in everything. According to our intelligence now, if they do what we think they can do, they will have more than we have for a while. There is no question about it."

January 23, 1959 - Part 1, page 42

Hearings
House Appropriations Subcommittee
DOD Appropriations for 1960

"Secretary Douglas: If what we are concerned with is a massive retaliatory capability, then it seems to me when you are talking about anything like the same number of missiles as you expect the Soviets to have, you are providing for a wholly unnecessary overkill to accomplish your purpose."

February 17, 1959 - page 850

"Mr. Mahon: Do you agree that according to your estimates the USSR will be ahead of the United States or will we have the capability of being ahead of the USSR in 1960, 1961 and 1962 in operational ICBMs?"

"Secretary Douglas: I agree with your conclusion that the USSR will be ahead, based on our present ICBM programs.

"Mr. Mahon: Do you agree during this period the USSR will be considerably ahead in the ICBM area?"

"Secretary Douglas: It could be if it recognizes the potential we give them."

"Mr. Mahon: According to the estimates, would we be considerably behind in the ICBM program during this period?"

"Secretary Douglas: As to numbers of missiles, yes.

February 19, 1959 - Part 1, pages 983-4

Hearings
House Appropriations Subcommittee
DOD Appropriations for 1960

"Mr. Mahon: Do you think it is unimportant that we will be, during this period, behind in numbers, according to estimates, in the ICBM competition?"

"Secretary Douglas: I do not think it is important."

"Mr. Mahon: If you had the money and the ability to do so, would you close the ICBM gap between the United States and the Soviet Union now?"

"Secretary Douglas: I would not try to do it in the 1960 period with the 1960 budget. I would not try to do it, I will say.

February 19, 1959 - Part 1, pages 983-4

Hearings
House Appropriations Subcommittee
DOD Appropriations for 1960

"Mr. Mahon: Do you think it important that the ICBM missile gap should ever be closed?"

"Secretary Douglas: Yes, I do..."

"Mr. Mahon: Do you, General White, concur in the answer to the question asked? If not, will you say why?"

"General White: The only one that I would modify at all is the last one. From my personal point of view, I think that I could conceive of a situation developing in such a way that we not only must close the gap but we must substantially exceed the Soviet capability in that respect."

"Mr. Ford: But it is a matter of when?"

"General White: It is a matter of when."

"Mr. Ford: And at the present time you do not think so."

"General White: I do not think so now."

House Subcommittee on Defense Appropriations

"Mr. Mahon: When we admit that we are behind in the inter-continental ballistic-missile area, of course that has military significance. We have admitted that; is that not true?"

"Dr. York: In terms of numbers of missiles only; not in terms of the status of development."

January 13, 1960

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Senate
Joint Hearings
Missile & Space Activities
30 January 1959

In response to Senator Martin's question on the estimate of the time it would take to catch up with the Russians in ballistic missiles:

"Dr. Von Braun: ... even with the utmost effort that we could put into this, it would take us 5 years to catch up with them, always assuming that they will continue their efforts at the present rate. In other words, we are behind them, and we have to drive faster than they if we are to catch up with them, and this will take at least 5 years."

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Also
"Secret Missile Report to Senate Revealed"
N. Y. Herald Tribune

"CIA Director Dulles told the committee that the American government expected the Soviet Union to have thirty-five inter-continental ballistic missiles 'on launchers' by the end of June of this year.

"He stated that the Soviets would further be expected to have some 140 to 200 ICBMs operational by mid-1961."

February 5, 1960

4m

Joseph Alsop
"Our Government's Untruths"
N.Y. Herald Tribune

Alsop: "A Very Big Issue: ICBM" - N. Y. Herald Tribune

"American government's official forecast of Soviet output
adjusted to:

1960	U.S.	30 ICBMs	versus	U.S.S.R.	100 ICBMs
1961	"	70		"	500
1962	"	130		"	1,000
1963	"	130		"	1,500
1964				"	2,000

January 8, 1959

Pearson
"The Angered by His CIA Chief"
Washington Post

"... the chief of Central Intelligence had privately requested the opportunity to appear before the Senate Preparedness Committee. Dulles was so alarmed at the tranquilizing testimony of Secretary of Defense Gates.... Here are the chilling figures Dulles presented... By mid-year 1960 the Russians should have between 40 and 45 inter-continental missiles ready to fire. The United States will have 20 operational Atlas missiles. ... by mid-1961 Russia should have between 200 and 300 combat-ready ICBMs. The United States will have only 50 Atlas and 10 Titan missiles. By mid-1962, Dulles expects the Russians to have between 500 and 800 missiles capable of reaching any American targets."

February 8, 1960

Life

Prints the following "scoreboard" which projects official estimates of U.S. and Russian ICBM strengths to June 1963:

	<u>1960</u>	<u>1961</u>	<u>1962</u>	<u>1963</u>
We	3	75	150	200-250
They	10	100	250	400-500

February 8, 1960 - page 51

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Extract
Statement by Governor Rockefeller
New York
July 23, 1960

"The Vice President and I met today at my home in New York City.... and reached agreement on the following specific and basic positions on foreign policy and national defense:

"4. In national defense, the swiftness of the technological revolution--and the warning signs of Soviet aggressiveness--makes clear that new efforts are necessary, for the facts of our survival in the 1950s give no assurance of such survival, in the same military posture, in the 1960s.

"5. The two imperatives of national security in the 1960s are:

"a. A powerful second-strike capacity--a nuclear retaliatory power capable of surviving surprise attack to inflict devastating punishment on any aggressor, and

"b. A modern, flexible and balanced military establishment with forces capable of deterring or meeting any local aggression.

"6. These imperatives require: more and improved bombers, airborne alert, speeded production of missiles and Polaris submarines, accelerated dispersal and hardening of bases, full modernization of the equipment of our ground forces, and an intensified program for civil defense."

THE MISSILE GAP

The public record of the late 1950's offers persuasive evidence that the American people had reason to fear the United States was going to lag dangerously the USSR in numbers of intercontinental ballistic missiles during the early 1960's. Sputnik and other Soviet space and missile successes of late 1957 and 1958 had thrown the West into political disarray and kindled throughout the world the myth of growing Communist technological and military superiority. This momentum carried over to Soviet foreign policies, which became increasingly adventuristic in such places as Berlin and condoned mounting tensions elsewhere, as in the Red Chinese pressure on the Offshore Islands. As a result serious concern arose in the United States that the Soviets might achieve what they believed to be an overall military superiority which would lead them into a nuclear war with the West through miscalculation, accident, or design.

To judge the situation the American people had two sources which often conflicted on defense matters--the defenders of the Eisenhower policy, and its critics. When these frequently countervailing sources tended toward the same conclusions, conditions naturally were considered out of balance in the direction of danger.

Administration officials during the period publicly acknowledged the missile gap before Congressional Committees. The unclassified records of these appearances furnish statements confirming the missile gap by both Secretary of Defense McElroy and his successor, Secretary Gates; by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Twining; by Secretary Douglas and Chief of Staff General Thomas D. White of the Air Force; and by Dr. Herbert F. York, the Director of Defense Research and Engineering. Moreover, from reading news reports, editorials, and informed columnists such as Joseph Alsop and Hansen Baldwin, it was possible to get some grasp on how these views were developed in classified testimony, in secret reports to the President (such as the Gaither Report of late 1957), and in briefings by the Director of Central Intelligence.

Critics of the US defense policies repeatedly highlighted the danger signals. For example, from 1958 through early 1961 the books on defense policy most influential all forecast the coming gap. General Gavin as early as 1958 in his War and Peace in the Space Age, acknowledged the coming period of danger. General Maxwell Taylor

reiterated and reinforced the alarm in his The Uncertain Trumpet. On the civilian side, in early 1961 Professor Henry Kissinger of Harvard, discussed in The Necessity for Choice the perils of the diplomatic situation which the new President faced because of our lag in missiles. All three of these critics were known for their views questioning undue reliance on massive strategic nuclear power. Yet each clearly foresaw the dangers ahead when we were expected to be far behind. These warnings were picked up, repeated, and given additional weight in articles and newspaper columns.

It is true there were statements from Administration officials attempting to deny any weakness in the US military position. The very uncertainty voiced the apparently shifting nature of the comments, and Administration vows to hold defense expenditures down, however, persuaded many individuals to give the benefit of any doubt to the Russians. This was particularly so since Khrushchev himself frequently reminded the world of his growing intercontinental rocket superiority.

The misgivings about the US missile and related space activities were so serious that, shortly after the Congress convened in 1960, a special joint investigation was launched. The hearings and the accompanying public debate emphasized the feeling that the US was lagging the USSR in long range missile production. Concern over these matters was not a partisan campaign issue; in the summer of 1960, Candidate Nixon, after a conference with Governor Rockefeller of New York, issued a joint statement which stated that the "imperatives" of national defense required" ... more and improved bombers, airborne alert, speeded production of missiles and Polaris submarines and accelerated dispersal and hardening of bases...."

The nation believed there was a missile gap and was determined to close it.